

Cotswold Border Harris County Courthouse District



A Virtual Tour

Photos by Will Howard

Harris County Historical Commission, Heritage Tourism Committee

July 2016

Finding the Harris County Courthouse District

Houston's Downtown is densely packed with interwoven and one-way and occasionally blocked streets.

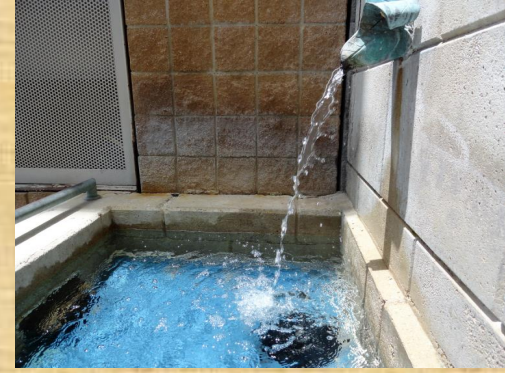
Finding a county office there can be eased if drivers and pedestrians are familiar with the Cotswold urban-scape sculptures along Prairie and Preston streets within the original city plan surveyed by Tom and Gail Borden for the Allen brothers in 1836.

Where is the Courthouse District?

- Most simply it is along Buffalo Bayou, beside Main Street.
- The District can be a casually defined by
 - Main Street on the west, as the street flows toward the Buffalo Bayou
 - Commerce Street along the Buffalo Bayou on the north border
 - Austin or La Branch Street on the east
 - Texas Avenue or Prairie Street on the south
- Most Cotswold installations are on **Prairie** and **Preston** streets, and three elements are on **Congress** Avenue.



What is the Cotswold Project?



Cotswold began in the 1990s to revitalize Downtown. One aspect is a series of outdoor sculptural art that

- beautifies the selected streetscapes
- injects imagery of natural elements into the built urban scene
- attracts folk to progress laterally across Downtown streets and sidewalks, even linger to look around.
- Cotswold also added elements away from the streets of interest here

What are the characteristics of Cotswold?

- water symbols and lines
- often actual water, pooling, pouring, cascading, or flowing
- vegetation art motifs
- live plant life
- human-made devices
- even beehives
- some are vertical, others horizontal
- some are simple and repetitive, others are complex
- most are at corners, some are at mid-block locations



What to expect from this virtual tour?

- What follows is a photographic inventory along the streets with occasional brief descriptions.
- Seeing them photographically here, can enable you to be more sensitive to them in the wild.
- In remembrance, you comfortably possess the space, the imagery, as yours.
- (Occasionally included here are photos of other artworks along the pathway that are not Cotswold, and are so identified for your clarity.)



Possible Driving Path

The relevant streets, Prairie and Preston and Congress, are one-way traffic.

- Begin on Prairie at Austin, follow the one-way traffic.
- From Prairie, turn right onto Bagby, and right onto Preston.
- From Preston, turn R on La Branch, turn R on Prairie, turn R onto Austin and turn L onto Congress.

Prairie at Austin, Caroline, & San Jacinto streets

The first 3 corners display an introductory staccato. The white and gray tapered “pillars” are topped with natural fern-like growth.



Harris County Cotswold Border



At Prairie at Fannin

Two pillars: One is a white pillar and
across the street is a pink one.

Then at Prairie at Main is another pink one set upon pink pavers.



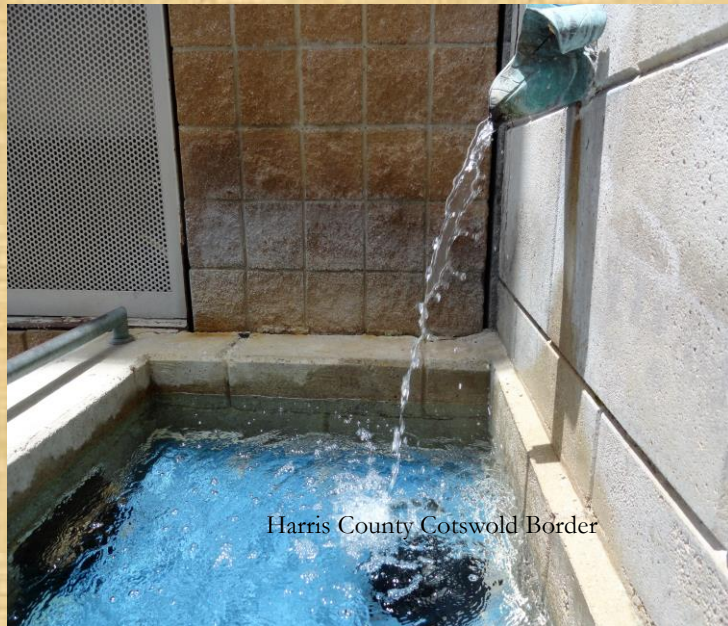
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Prairie at Travis:

a complex setting: slide 1:

a colorful applique wall flanked left with a spout, a hidden cascade behind, a stubby post at right flank, and as an aside - a fern-topped pillar with a distinctive red granite neck.



Prairie at Travis:

slide 2:

the appliqued twinning
vine in red, blue, and
green upon a triangular,
gray, masonry back.

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Prairie at Milam and at Louisiana streets

Again colors of gray, white, and green.



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Prairie at Smith

Not Cotswold but instead

David Adickes “Virtuoso” fronting the Lyric Building

The monumental cellist with a violinist, bassist, and flautist backup trio



Harris O.



U-turn: Continue on Prairie, pass Smith St.,
through the Wortham Opera Theater, cross Prairie Bridge,
turn right on Bagby, pass by Aquarium,
turn right on Preston, cross Preston Bridge



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Preston at Smith

Water ripples around the gridded, small, nail pegs, down the overlapping, olive green strips composing the tall, rectangular, metallic wall, and flows down the blue-bottomed, slanted brown-tone clad trough cutting the hypotenuse of the triangular device, into a whirlpool collector. All resting upon harmonious stone slabs



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Preston at Louisiana

Two large, round, blue-bottomed, spurting holes in the ground with appropriate covers (flat and angular) and attending gray on gray protective posts.



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Preston at Milam

This tall, unusually square, geometric miniature tower is at bottom pink granite layers (alternatively smooth faced and quarry faced) upon which blue synthetic layers are divided by metallic lines. Atop all is a curved device that answers a subtle curved line from below.



On Preston between Milam and Travis not Cotswold

But in Market Square. A mosaic fountain with benches is by Malou Flato.



Preston approaching Main

Two beehives with opposite shapes. Long, curving, cascading water feature terminating with tall beehive cascade and a round wheel pool.



Preston between Main and Fannin

(along County Administration Bldg)

a long double feature: slide 1

A long bed of green, pencil-shaped plants,
adjacent to a curving water feature.



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Preston between Main and Fannin: : slide 2

Details: Cascading water down a slightly terraced wall, into a curving trench, with ends curling into a whirlpool drain.



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Preston at Fannin
nothing at the corner, but look a mid-block

Preston between Fannin and San Jacinto, a complex setting, slide 1:

(across street from 1910 Courthouse)

The sidewalk becomes a pink granite surface,
upon which are two polygonal-shaped side granite blocks
that partially frame a large, raised round granite block.

All surfaces have incised lines, a map of Buffalo Bayou crossing Harris County.

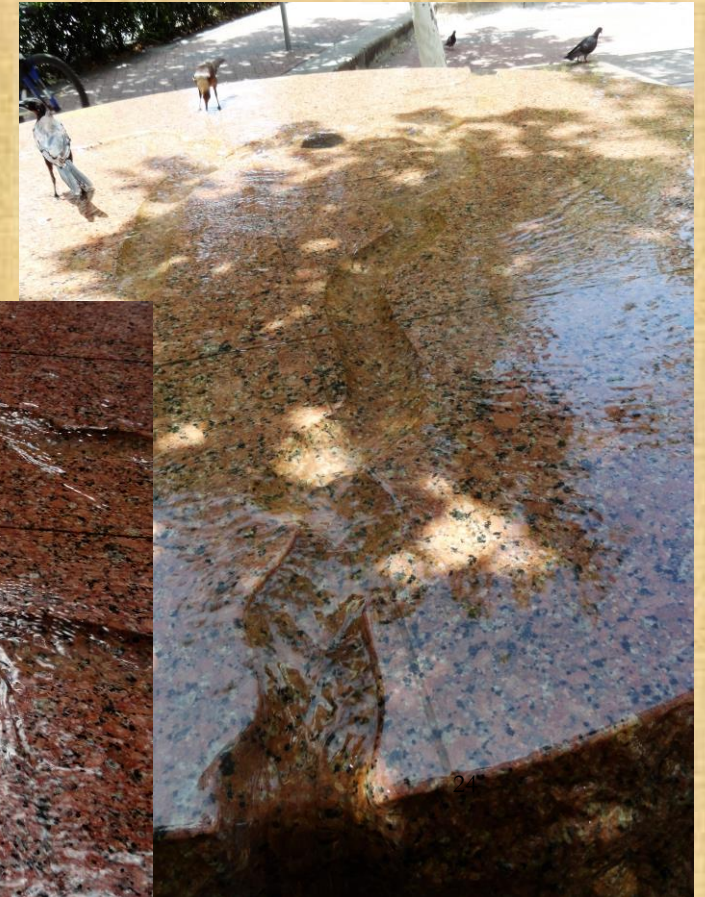


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Preston between Fannin and San Jacinto, slide 2:
Bayou map on top of raised, central, round, pink granite block,
Water gurgles up from the central point and flows along channels to the
edge, down into a surrounding metal grate.



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Preston between Fannin and San Jacinto, slide 3:
two pink granite side blocks with map surfaces



Preston between Fannin and San Jacinto,
slide 4:

Pink granite sidewalk with Bayou
mapping



Preston at San Jacinto

A Tower: Another monument to a square world. The light blue curving line, at left, is more evident as it ascends and breaks the gray division lines and approaches the top device. It is bare seen in the granite.

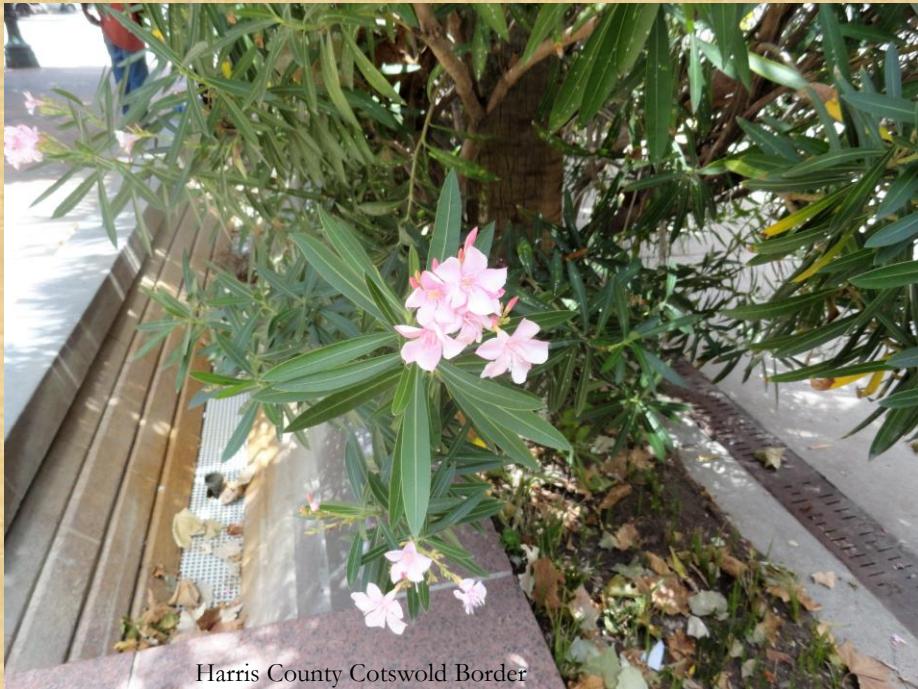


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Preston at Caroline

Here two rectangular trenches in triangular depth are trimmed and lined with pink granite and can feature water cascades below the flowering bushes above.



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Preston at Austin

Nothing too fancy here, but not repeated elsewhere, just a large, squatty, round, white concrete pot with undulating sides, displaying seasonal flowers and greenery. It is set upon a white concrete circle, surrounded by pink toned pavers, set in circular fashion before they spread into a grid of varied shapes.



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Preston at La Branch



- Here are three shorter variations of the common fern-topped pillars.
- These serve as entry point pleasantries to the building.

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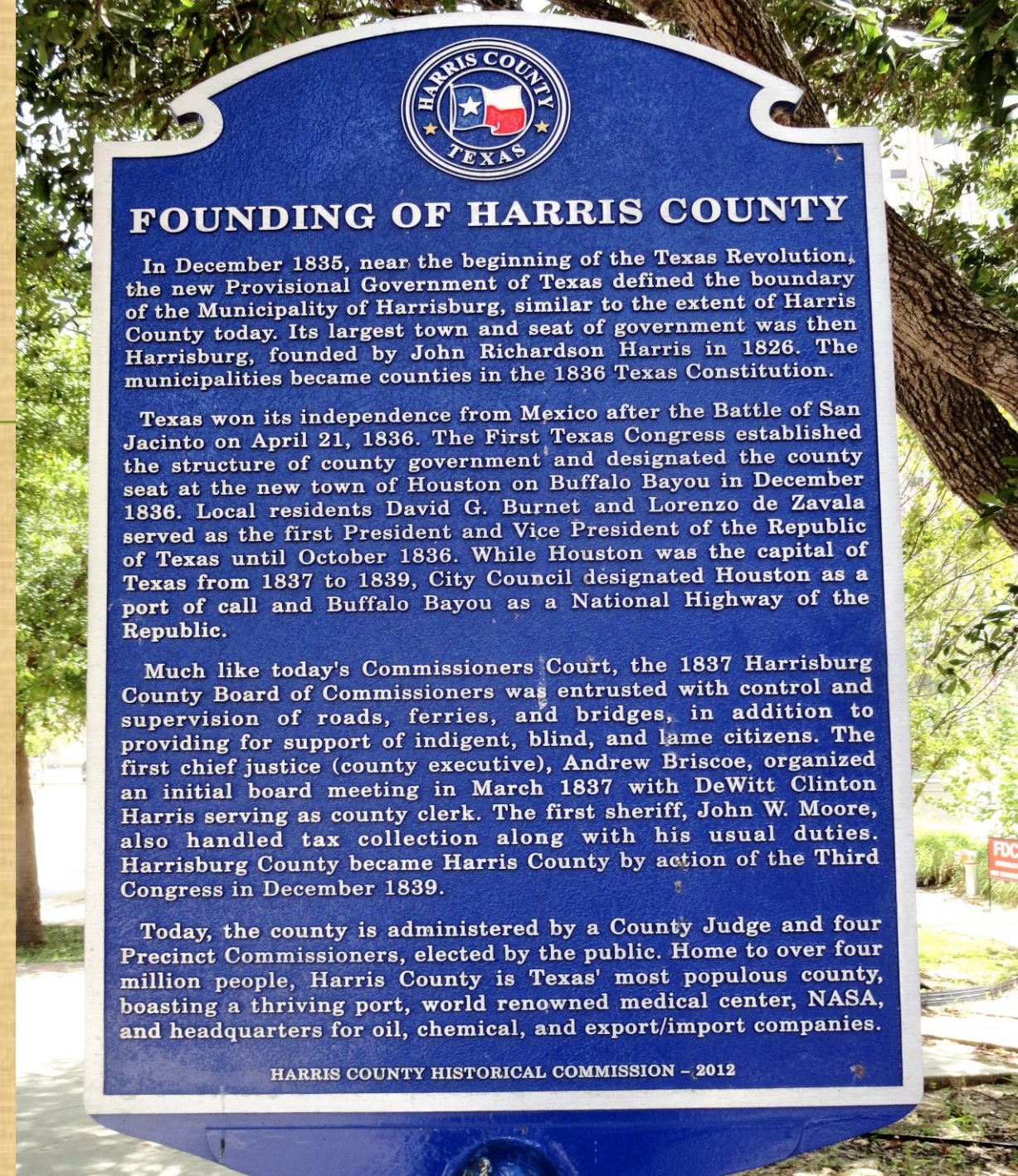
Drive: From Preston,
Turn R onto La Branch,

turn R on Prairie,
turn R onto Austin,
pass Preston, and
turn L onto Congress

On Congress, pass Caroline Street

Congress at San Jacinto

Another granite and translucent blue tower and a blue backgrounded historical marker on the “Founding of Harris County.”



Congress between
San Jacinto and Fannin
across street from 1910 Courthouse, in front
of the Family Law Center is a black
background historical marker on early
Harris County



Harris County



Congress at Fannin no Cotswold element here

Congress at Main

Beehives on both sides of Main One squattily shaped and one tall, they spout water from their tops, allowing water to cascade down the undulating sides, and gathering in a pool with a curving trail..



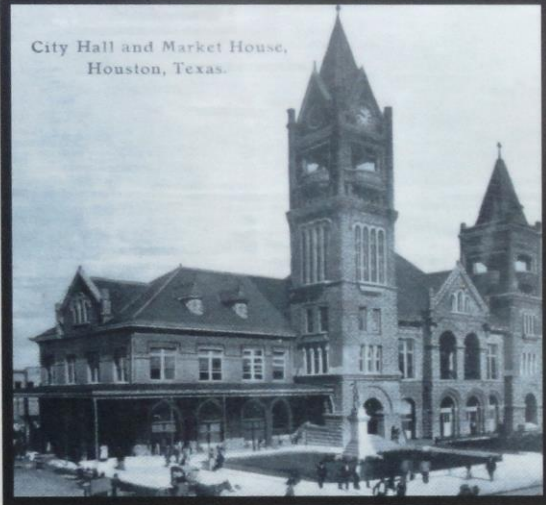
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Congress at Travis: Not a Cotswold element

THE OLD CITY HALL CLOCK & BELL

City Hall and Market House,
Houston, Texas.



The Friedman Clock Tower provides a permanent home for the 1876 fire bell and the 1904 clock, both of which at one time were important functional adornments to the Houston City Hall and Market House.

Edward Duhemel designed the 1877 City Hall, the third to occupy the site, where the 2,800 pound fire bell originally hung. It was cast by "A. Fulton's Son and Co., Pittsburgh, PA as 1876" for the Houston City Fire Department.

When that building burned in 1906, George Dickey designed a new and larger structure with a tower housing the salvaged bell and new Seth Thomas clock with four glass dials, each seven-and-a-half feet in diameter. It cost \$1,100 in 1904.

When City Government moved to its present location, the clock was stored in crates in the City Hall. Over the next half-century the bell disappeared and was finally recovered in East Texas in 1988.

In 1994 Houston City Council authorized restoration of the clock mechanism, anticipating that a permanent home for the clock could soon be found.

THE CLOCK TOWER PROJECT

Morgan A. Hill, Chairman

Karen W. Carr | Douglas L. Lawing | Kenny Meyer | Barry M. Moore, FAIA

Gary W. Warwick | A. Pat Daniels | Gregory W. Neuman

DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT • DOWNTOWN DISTRICT



Congress between Travis and Milam

Not a Cotswold element

Another mosaic fountain & benches by Malou Flato on Market Square



Congress at Milam

The last pink and blue tower

- The curve connecting the pink granite, blue layers is very clear. And you can see that the blue layers' metal separation bands change from one width to two as the curve passes.

Harris County Cotswold Border



END OF VIRTUAL TOUR

Come back again to the
Harris County Courthouse District
Enjoy the Art Along the Way